

# News Release

## *National Wildlife Refuge System*



Big Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
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### **Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge To Hold 17th Annual Open House on October 17**

Time to dust off your hiking boots, break out the rain gear, and find those binoculars ...National Wildlife Refuge Week and the annual Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge open house are coming soon! Reservations are now being accepted for the 17th annual open house on Saturday, October 17.

"The Refuge has been opening its gates to the public in celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week for 17 years now. This is our annual opportunity to welcome visitors to Hakalau Forest," said Refuge Manager Jim Kraus. "My staff and I look forward to sharing the beauty and value of this native Hawaiian rainforest with its owners, the American people. It's a wonderful opportunity to see our unique and colorful Hawaiian forest birds, the koa reforestation efforts, and many rare plant species. Hakalau provides a secure habitat for many threatened and endangered species found only on the Big Island of Hawai'i."

Residents and visitors are invited to hike through the Pua 'Ākala Tract, which harbors a high-elevation rainforest, many native birds such as 'i'iwi and 'elepaio, and significant numbers of endangered species including the Hawai'i creeper and Hawai'i 'ākepa. A historic 115-year old koa cabin also will be open for viewing.

Visitors will be met by refuge staff and tour leaders at the Pua 'Ākala Barn anytime between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. They will receive a briefing on refuge management objectives and strategies and a description of the plants and animals the Refuge protects. Rainforest hikes of varying lengths will be offered. The hikes will be led by biologists and staff familiar with native Hawaiian flora and fauna. Visitors will also have the opportunity to tour the refuge greenhouse and learn about the forest restoration program. Cultural resource protection, weed control projects, tree-planting efforts and the University of Hawai'i's field station will also be highlighted.

An interpretive trail bordering Hakalau Gulch will be featured during this year's open house. The one-half-mile trail was funded and constructed by the Friends of Hakalau Forest and is dedicated in memory of Wayne Ortiz, a former refuge employee. The trail has an accompanying brochure describing native plants, some of their cultural uses, and their significance as forest bird habitat. Open house visitors are invited to hike the trail beginning at the trailhead located inside the gate leading to the administrative site and greenhouse.

Participants must arrange their own transportation to the refuge. A four-wheel-drive vehicle is required for the two-hour drive from Hilo, Waimea, or Kona.

"Families with children are welcome but be prepared for a long rough ride, rugged terrain, and primitive facilities," said Kraus. Visitors should come prepared for wet chilly weather and bring their own lunch, water, binoculars, and rain gear. Pets are not allowed. Reservations are required and may be obtained by calling the refuge office in Hilo at 443-2300 by October 15. Directions and additional information will be emailed to all participants.

*Working with others, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.*

Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge consists of 32,730 acres of native forest and grassland on the windward slope of Mauna Kea and 5,300 acres of forest on the leeward slope of Mauna Loa. The refuge was established on October 28, 1985, to protect and manage endangered forest birds and their habitat. It contains some of the finest stands of koa-‘ōhi‘a forest remaining in the state.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

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